

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2023

Chancellor Lester W. Young Jr
New York State Board of Regents
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Commissioner Betty A. Rosa
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12234

Dear Chancellor Young and Commissioner Rosa,

We write to you with grave concerns about a resource listed on the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) website intended to assist parents and caregivers in discussing the ongoing conflict in Israel. Since the posting of the New York Family article linked, and the video included in the article entitled "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict explained | CBC Kids News," we have had numerous parents, Jewish educators, Rabbis, and community leaders reach out to our offices to express outrage over the NYSED's endorsement of these resources. This article and video are not only factually inaccurate and lack requisite context, but are clearly biased against Israel. Sadly, this appears to be representative of the pervasive anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist material that emanates from your offices. In response, we ask that you answer our questions to clarify who approved of this action and if it is consistent with the NYSED's education policy.

The resource in question is a link to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) video entitled "The Israeli-Palestinian conflict explained." First and foremost, the CBC has a history of anti-Israel bias¹, and uses maps and terminology that mislead the state of the conflict. In the opening image of this video, the map carves out the Golan Heights, whereas the United States recognizes that the Golan Heights is fully a part of Israel. Later, the video refers to "occupied East Jerusalem," whereas U.S. policy does not actively recognize a split in Jerusalem. Furthermore, it recognizes the full West Bank as occupied, whereas pursuant to the Oslo II Accords, Area A is fully under the control of the Palestinian Authority and Area B is jointly administered. This terminology completely fails to provide an accurate perspective on the conflict.

Leaving that aside, this video is a gross oversimplification of the long-standing conflict in Israel. While we fully appreciate the need to simplify things when educating our children, this video leaves out critical context, without which, one cannot even begin to have a dialogue about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The opening scene of this video claims that this conflict is about "one thing: land." This notion glosses over the true essence of the conflict, which is the desire of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and their supporters to wipe out Israel and the Jews, whereas Israel is fighting for the right of it and the Jewish people to exist. This is not merely about land, but the right to exist. This is made clear by the mainstream Palestinian chant of "from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea," implying the lack of existence of a Jewish state entirely. The video also discounts that even during Ottoman control, Jews and Christians lived in the region.

The video then summarizes the reaction to the UN Partition Plan as "the two sides couldn't agree." This is inaccurate, as the Jewish people fully accepted the UN Partition Plan, whereas of the parties directly involved, only the Palestinian people "couldn't agree" and rejected this plan. The video then explains the fallout from Israel's Declaration of Independence, consistent with the UN Partition Plan, as "sparking several wars." This completely omits the fact that every Arab nation surrounding Israel, at the Palestinians' urging, declared war on Israel in attempt to eradicate the sole Jewish state. The video further glosses over reality by summarizing the

¹ <https://thecjn.ca/perspectives/opinions/memo-to-the-cbc-israeli-lives-matter/>; <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/cbc-watch-time-for-activists-masquerading-as-journalists-to-get-off-the-tax-funded-payroll>; <https://honestreporting.ca/cbc-reverses-policy-allows-journalists-who-signed-anti-israel-open-letter-to-cover-israel-related-news-stories/>

aftermath of this conflict as “Israel captured more territory,” as if Israel was the aggressor in a war of conquest. The video never addresses the fact that in every conflict of the era, the Independence War, Six-Day War, and Yom Kippur War, Israel was defending itself against much larger forces focused on eradicating its existence.

In the conclusion of the video, it summarizes the conflict as “Israel wants to protect its land and people.” While the latter is certainly true, the former fully discounts the numerous land-for-peace deals Israel has offered the Palestinians. Despite gaining territory after multiple Arab and Palestinian-launched wars, Israel has offered numerous land-for-peace deals to the Palestinians, creating a state of their own in exchange. The Palestinians have rejected these offers. The notion that Israel is merely trying to hold onto all of its land claim is ludicrous and has no basis in reality.

Finally, the video states that “Both sides have used violence to protect themselves,” drawing a clear equivocation between the two. This could not be further from the truth. While Israel regularly aims to mitigate civilian casualties by dropping leaflets, evacuation orders, and performing roof knocks prior to raids, Palestinian leadership almost exclusively targets civilians. In the most recent example, Hamas broadcasted videos of its soldiers murdering, beheading, raping, torturing, kidnapping, and brutalizing children, women, and the elderly. This includes numerous Americans. These were not soldiers, but civilians. Further, it often launches rockets into primarily civilian areas and celebrates the death of civilians. There can be no equivocation between violence used by these barbarians and the Israeli Defense Forces, which have clear rules for engagement consistent with international law.

Sadly, this is not the first time this type of vile anti-Semitism has been disseminated from your office. In February, we sent a letter to you regarding a question on the NYS Regents Exam in Global History and Geography which similarly ignored relevant context and asked which nation “benefited” from the consequences of the numerous invasions of Israel. This concerning pattern of double standards and anti-Semitism disseminated by the NYSED and Board of Regents reflects poorly upon your departments, especially as our state has such a large Jewish population. First and foremost, you both should immediately apologize to parents for this disgusting oversight. In addition, we demand your responses to the following questions by Thursday, November 2nd, 2023:

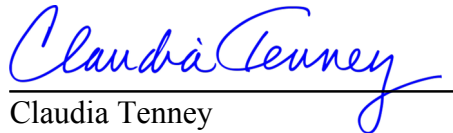
1. Is it the policy of the NYSED or Board of Regents to teach current events in a manner that is inconsistent with U.S. policy?
2. What was the approval chain for the link containing this video to be included on the NYSED’s website? Did you both personally approve this link?
3. Is it typical of the NYSED or Board of Regents to omit relevant context?
4. Is this the type of biased presentation of sources used by the NYSED or Board of Regents to educate our children on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the classroom?
5. Does the NYSED or Board of Regents draw an equivalence between the Israeli Defense Forces and Hamas as this video clearly does?
6. Does the NYSED or Board of Regents recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization?
7. After the anti-Semitic question was included in the NYS Regents Exam in Global History and Geography, were any process changes implemented to prevent this from happening again? If so, how did


this fail? If not, why?

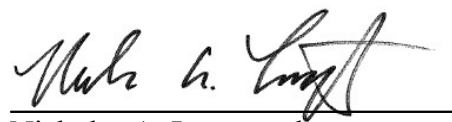
8. Does the NYSED or Board of Regents plan to implement any policy changes after this horrific incident to ensure that your agencies stop distributing anti-Semitic material? If so, what will the changes be? If not, why?


It is time the NYSED finally performs some needed self-reflection on its actions and takes meaningful steps to correct its biases. All New Yorkers deserve access to a fair, balanced, and factually accurate education. We look forward to receiving your responses and working with you all to fix any deficiencies at NYSED.

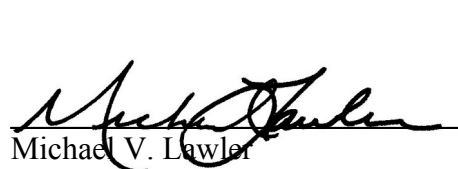
Sincerely,


Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress


Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress



Andrew R. Garbarino
Member of Congress


Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress


Anthony D'Esposito
Member of Congress


Marcus J. Molinaro
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Nick LaLota
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Brandon Williams
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Nicole Malliotakis
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